

Immanuel Congregational Church

A Member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA)

Written Testimony to the Connecticut General Assembly

RE: H.B. 6659- "An act concerning the state budget for the biennium ending June 30, 2025"

February 26, 2023

Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee, Chairs Osten and Walker, Vice Chairs Exum and Hartley and Ranking Members Berthel and Nuccio:

We are writing from Immanuel Congregational Church, a member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA). GHIAA is a network of over 50 diverse congregations across the theological spectrum working together for justice.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony in support of a \$20 million dollar allocation over two years to community violence reduction efforts across the state. Although this amount was not specifically in the Governor's budget, it is necessary and will save lives.

Street outreach programs such as Hartford Communities That Care, Mothers United Against Violence, and Compass Youth Collaborative and other organizations are associated with up to 37 percent reductions in gun injuries. However, funding for gun violence intervention and prevention in the state of Connecticut is not consistent enough to sustain these organizations and move the needle to end gun violence. Therefore, GHIAA is seeking funding from the state to support the work gun violence prevention and intervention organizations are doing on the ground, on the front lines.

The Connecticut Commission on Community Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention launched in August of this year through the Department of Public Health, and was tasked to distribute 2 million dollars to prevention and intervention organizations across the state. This is admirable, but it is not enough. The Commission is made up of experts in their fields, appointed to serve by legislation passed in the 2022 legislative session. These experts include trauma surgeons, street level intervention specialists, public health professionals and those who have lost loved ones to violence. In their report, submitted to the legislature in January of this year, the Commission recommended that funding be allocated at the \$20 million dollar level over 3 years to provide continuity of resources and support.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit this testify to the committee for consideration.

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